

Media, PA— A Veteran of 31 years in the United States Navy who commanded an aircraft carrier battle group that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) has committed to improving care and providing resources for Veterans in his District, through local events, and nationally, through legislation. The Congressman has recognized the considerable challenges facing the youngest generation of Veterans, including the recent study that has found that about 300,000 of the 1.64 million Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or major depression. According to the non-profit Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), the nation's first and largest group dedicated to the Troops and Veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Congressman Sestak's record reflects his mission as he has voted in the best interests of these brave men and women 13 out of 13 times. —

“I am proud to receive this recognition from a group dedicated to seeing our Veterans get the support they need,” said Congressman Sestak. “However, this is not an honor that one consciously pursues, but something I believe I received simply by doing what is right by those who have served our country.”

One of the significant positions separating Congressman Sestak from his peers was his support for an appropriate GI Bill to ensure a post-secondary education to Americans who have put nation before self. The Congressman voted against weak legislation that did not cover the full cost of tuition, instead working toward a bill that guarantees a full college education for men and women who have served three years on active duty in Iraq and/or Afghanistan. With the legislation that the Congressman helped pass, the government will pay for four years of education up to the level of the most expensive in-state public school. In addition, servicemen and women who have at least three months on active duty since September 11, 2001, including those in the National Guard and Reserve, are given the ability to collect education benefits.

“While we must devote as many resources as possible to combating unprecedented mental health problems and homelessness among this group of Vets, we cannot forget a common theme I have heard from the young Veterans I hosted for a discussion at Delaware County Community College and the hundreds of current and former servicemen who have attended my two Veterans Summits,” said Congressman Sestak. “The young men and women returning home want access to a good job and the benefits necessary to support their families. We need to provide this, in part, through education and business initiatives that give them opportunities to transition from the armed forces to the working world.”

Other legislation that the Congressman supported to gain IAVA's favor included provisions for:

- A \$3.6 billion boost for Veterans' health care for fiscal year 2007; the largest increase in funding in VA history for 2008; and an additional \$4.6 billion increase for 2009.
- Supportive housing for very low income Veteran families and housing vouchers for homeless Veterans, as almost 2,000 homeless Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans.
- Improved availability of suicide prevention counseling.
- Centers of Excellence to research, prevent and treat PTSD and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) with improved coordination between the Department of Defense and Veterans Affairs; and better diagnosis and treatment of TBI through mandatory screening for Veterans accessing VA health care.
- Special immigrant visa status for Iraqi and Afghan interpreters offering critical support to our troops.
- Expanding Veteran's benefits by allowing Veterans five years to access care instead of two.
- Requiring that the Defense Department continue to pay bonuses to troops forced to leave the military because of injuries sustained in combat.

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the Congress.

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